

Transportation Funding Opportunity and the Utah Legislature

February 19, 2015

As I meet with other mayors from around the state of Utah, one of the things we all have in common is the need for more money to meet our transportation infrastructure needs. Of course, the specific needs vary widely from community to community. But the bottom line for all of us is the same: we need more money, whether it is to meet the expanding needs of rapidly growing cities or to safely maintain our existing infrastructure – or more likely, both.

Transportation is truly the backbone of our economy as well as our quality of life here in Utah. A quality transportation system offers personal benefits to everyone, including more time with families, a cleaner environment and better health. Of course, when I speak about transportation in this sense, I'm not just talking about the maintenance and construction of roads – although that is part of it. But I'm also talking about our other transportation needs, including sidewalks, trails, bike paths and mass transit – the very things that Murray residents often speak to me about. It is clear to me that here in Murray as well as elsewhere in the state, we need a comprehensive transportation approach that provides multiple positive outcomes.

Unfortunately, it is equally clear that, like all Utah communities, Murray has a variety of transportation needs that can no longer be adequately addressed with the one source of dedicated funding we've had in the past. The gas tax provides less than half of the necessary funding to meet our needs, and can only be used for local roads, not for all the other transportation priorities in our city. That is why we have joined the Utah Transportation Coalition to all our voice to other cities in asking for additional and more flexible funding options.

We do the best we can with the funding we receive from the local gas tax funds, but there just isn't enough money there to meet all our transportation infrastructure issues. So when we come up short and we have a pressing need for infrastructure construction or maintenance, we have to pull funds from other areas – such as public safety – to meet those needs. If we continue to do this, our community will see a decline in essential services. This is the sad reality we face as we continue to make choices with the infrastructure funding that is currently available to us.

That is why, as your mayor, I join the Utah Transportation Coalition in supporting the state's Unified Transportation Plan, which addresses the diverse needs of Utah's communities – now and in the future. It also embraces our traditional Utah values of wise

and careful planning, cooperative problem solving and fiscal responsibility. Yes, it requires more funding than is currently allocated for transportation. But I believe that additional funding will be worth the small individual sacrifices it will take to make possible for Murray and all Utah communities the kind of smart, efficient, sustainable transportation systems they deserve.

To learn more about this effort, please visit www.UtahTransportation.org.